

ARF Honor Roll—In Memoriam

Phillip J. Walker

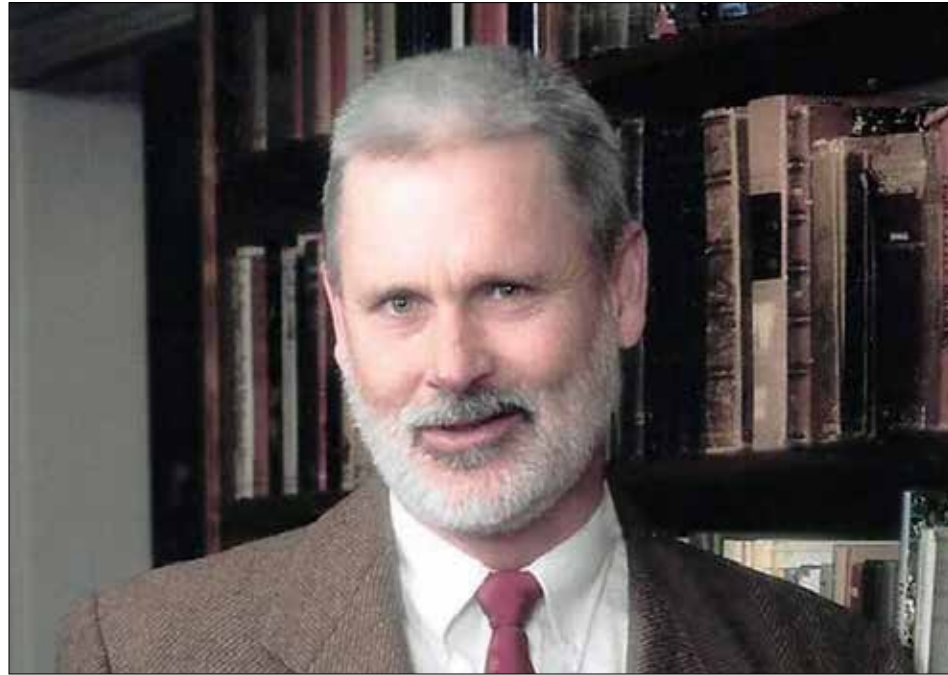
Phillip J. Walker (Phil) died unexpectedly on April 6, 2018. This annual report is dedicated to Phil.

Phil became a member of the Agricultural Research Foundation Board (ARF) in 1991. He was elected vice-president in 1998 and became president in 2009. His insights and leadership have been invaluable to the Foundation. He led the organization through several major staff transitions and into a new mode of operation in terms of handling invested funds. Guideposts for ARF were his historical memory and his personal goal of always doing what was best for the commodity commissions and other grower groups that invested their dollars in OSU research.

The Walker family agricultural legacy dates back six generations. Michael Henry Walker traveled the Oregon Trail from Iowa and settled in the Philomath area in the mid-1850s. The Walker family moved to Rickreall in 1873 and then to Independence in 1890. Walkdale Farms, just west of Salem, was established by the family in 1963. It is one of the Willamette Valleys largest producers of sweet cherries. The farm also produces sour cherries, filberts and prunes. Phil was born in 1953 and grew up working the family's orchards. He took over management of Walkdale Farms from his father in the mid-1980s.

Phil attended college at the University of Oregon and obtained a degree in political science in 1975. Phil was a lifelong learner. He continued to take community college classes in chemistry, biology and business. He knew this knowledge would be of benefit to the family farming operation and to the industries of which he was a part. He was a modern day renaissance man. In addition to his peer-recognized farming knowledge, he had interests and talents in music, sports, and journalism.

Phil was a member of the Oregon Sweet Cherry Commission, Oregon Tart Cherry Commission, Oregon Hazelnut Commission, and Nut Grower's Society of Oregon. He served in leadership positions with many of these



organizations. Phil received the Nut Grower of the Year Award in 1997. He served as Polk County Commissioner in 1998 and again in 2003-05. He was on the Polk County Budget Committee and Citizens Advisory Board for Corrections Facilities.

Phil played in different bands throughout his youth. He put away his guitar as he raised his family but picked it back up in the last decade. He was the founder of the group that is now known as Little Hickory. He could play almost any instrument put in front of him and sang with a loud, gravelly voice.

Phil was active as a football, basketball, and baseball coach while his three sons were in school and continued involvement in sports for many years thereafter. He was a member of the West Salem Little League Board of Directors. He found that shoelessness had benefits in sports and other activities in life.

Phil was a community representative on the Salem Statesman-Journal Editorial Board and wrote editorials for the Journal on issues where government and business intersected. He often referred to himself as "the token redneck" in the editorial group.

Phil was not the first Walker to serve ARF. His father Gordon was on the board from 1958 to 1987. Gordon served on several committees and as vice president. Together the Walkers provided over 55 years of service to ARF.

Phil's death is a great loss for ARF, Oregon agriculture, and the many other communities he served.

